

March 16th, 2020

Dear All,

By now you may have seen the news that Alameda County has joined five other Bay Area counties in declaring a mandatory “Shelter-in-Place” Order. The Order takes effect at 12:01am tonight, Tuesday March 17, and runs through April 7, though the duration may change as new developments occur. You can read the text of the Order

here: <http://acphd.org/media/559658/health-officer-order-shelter-in-place-20200316.pdf>

We know, this is not the way any of us wanted to spend St. Patrick’s Day!

Sadly this means that, through the duration of the Order, St. Mark’s will be closed — though, as you’ll see further below, we still intend to continue live-streaming the 10am Service on Sunday as long as we can. The Order does permit us to continue “essential business functions” such as sanitation, paying bills, and employee payroll & benefits. But we are encouraged (and legally required) to do everything else remotely if possible.

That means we have to ask all of you, please do not come to church for any reason except those “essential business functions,” which are being coordinated by Toni our Parish Administrator, Bruce our Treasurer, and Lisa our Senior Warden. Furthermore, from now on, all in-person meetings will be canceled or postponed until the Order is lifted. Committees and ministries are encouraged to explore Zoom, FaceTime, or other options to keep in touch. We are discussing with Hot Meals leadership the best way of continuing this essential feeding ministry, but other ministries, and even pastoral activities, will be much reduced: for example, clergy are no longer permitted to visit hospitals or make home visits except to attend the dying.

We know there will be confusion about this, what is or is not happening, and how meetings might occur by other means; and further we know that many gatherings are difficult or painful to postpone. Please continue to be patient with us and with one another, continue to communicate with your fellow parishioners and colleagues, and continue to be generous with everyone as we try to figure out how best to meet these new challenges.

Thank you to everyone who participated remotely in yesterday’s live-streamed service! We received a lot of positive feedback, though we understand several of you had a hard time accessing the feed without a Facebook account. A Facebook account is not necessary to watch, but we are finding that it is not immediately obvious how to watch without one; stay tuned for added clarity how to do that. In the meantime, we’ve posted the recording both to our Facebook page ([@stmarksberkeley](https://www.facebook.com/stmarksberkeley)) and to the church’s main website (<https://stmarksberkeley.org/livestreamedservices/>), so anyone can watch after the fact if they like.

Given the seriousness of the Shelter-In-Place order, we do not yet know how our future live-stream plans will be affected. We will share more information as we get it, but for the time being we are still intending to live-stream from St. Mark’s at 10am on Sundays until we can all return to church.

The Daily Office will continue also, though from Fr. Blake's apartment and not from the chapel! Please do join in as you can, being especially careful to pray through our parish prayer list at least once a day. While not the teacher we might have chosen, the Coronavirus has the potential to reintroduce us all afresh to the glories of the Book of Common Prayer and its deep resources for personal as well as corporate prayer.

Fr. Blake and the parish staff will continue to be available by email and will continue to do what they can to look after all our people through this trying and confusing time. The YADAs will continue to offer help for anyone who needs it getting groceries or other necessities or getting to essential appointments. Please contact Fr. Blake, or Toni, to be connected with this important and life-giving ministry. Thank you to the YADAs for continuing to offer this!

Others have observed, this year a Lenten fast has been thrust upon us more burdensome than we might have chosen, and heavier than anyone would have advised: a fast from contact with one another, even as far as our public prayer and worship. We do not enter such a fast lightly, but only for overwhelming public safety reasons. As with any fast, chosen or not, please let's all do what we can to bear it joyfully. Let's resolve to be patient and generous with one another as we try to live our common life under uncommon stress. We are facing real danger — not only from the disease, but from the economic toll of so many closures. In such times the Church's historic witness has been characterized by a joyful hope: Christ has conquered death and opened the gates of eternal life. Let us hold fast to that hope without wavering, even while we take precaution for our safety and that of our loved ones.

In the meantime, and as always, please do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions or concerns.

With love and prayers,
Fr. Blake & Lisa Key
Rector & Senior Warden